



The Kunduz Oasis and Military Globalisation

Stefan Schütte

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Oasis dans la mondialisation : ruptures et continuités

*Oases in the globalization:
ruptures and continuities*



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The Kunduz Oasis and Military Globalisation

Stefan SCHÜTTE

Centre for Development Studies, Geographic Sciences, Freie Universität Berlin
E-mail: stefan.schuette@fu-berlin.de

L'intervention Occidentale en Afghanistan est un indicateur des grands processus en cours, dans le cadre très humanitarisé, caractérisé par l'enchevêtrement d'acteurs militaires, ONGs et pouvoir politique, qui tentent d'établir une « paix libérale » dans ce pays. Dans ce contexte, la mondialisation militaire qui a pris pied en Afghanistan, influence les configurations sociales locales et les interconnexions qui touchent spécialement l'économie sociale des oasis comme pôle économique et agricole en Afghanistan.

Au regard de l'exemple spécifique de l'oasis de Kunduz au nord du pays, on tentera d'analyser les changements locaux affectés par l'émergence d'acteurs militaires internationaux. L'analyse sera faite au reflet du contexte historique dans lequel se sont opérés ces changements dans l'oasis de Kunduz. Ces résultats sont issus de multiples travaux de terrain, en particulier sur le district de Chahar Dara, sur la marge orientale de l'oasis. L'étude s'intéresse à la structure du système de production agricole et les mutations en cours dans les pâturages itinérants, régulés par les changements dans les usages coutumiers du sol sur les marges arides de l'oasis. Ces processus sont accompagnés de nouvelles configurations sociales dans l'oasis de Kunduz qui s'opèrent avec l'éveil de nouvelles stratégies de contre-offensive mises en place par les militaires étrangers

Keywords: Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency, Rural Development, Agriculture, Pastoralism

Mots clés : Afghanistan, contre-insurrection, développement rural, agriculture, pastoralisme

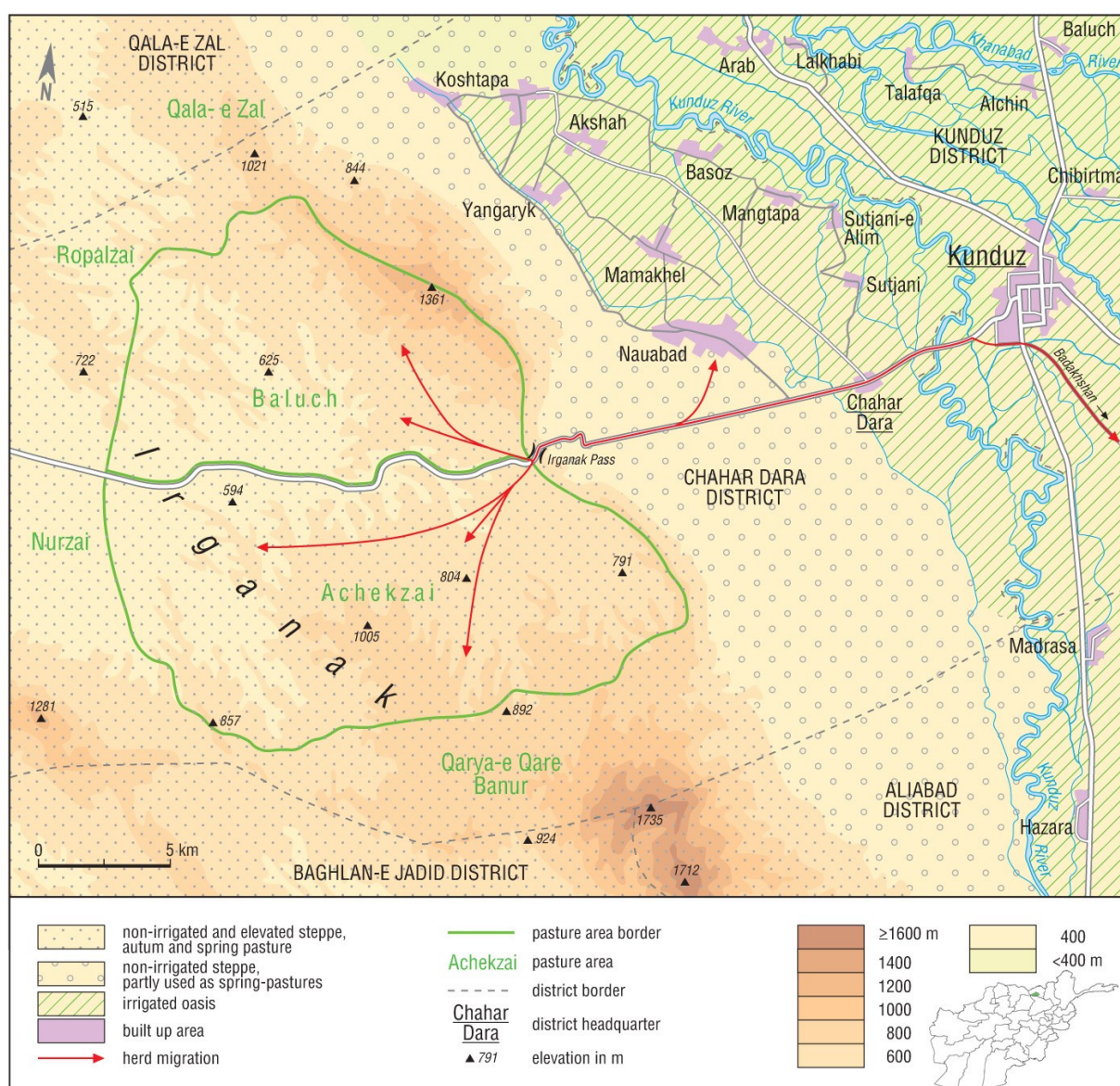
Introduction

Rural livelihoods in Afghanistan largely depend on agriculture and animal husbandry. The irrigated oases of the country function as the centres of agricultural production and provide the economic backbone for a majority of the rural population. The essential role of oases has not diminished after 30 years of warfare. The strive for control over the limited areas of arable lands in a country whose physical landscape is dominated by pastures and barren lands, has been a political and military goal of rulers and strongmen throughout Afghan history. International intervention has always exercised significant influence in the process, and today the presence of foreign military in Afghanistan is indicative of wider processes in a humanitarian present that is characterised by the entanglement of military actors, NGOs, and political power striving to establish a liberal peace in the country. In these contexts, a militarised globalisation gaining foothold in Afghanistan influences local social configurations and interconnections that especially affect the social economy of oases as the dominant economic and agricultural centres in Afghanistan.

Looking at the specific example of the Kunduz oasis in Northern Afghanistan (Fi. 1) it is attempted here to analyse local changes affected by the emergence of global military actors, but also the continuity and flexibility of agro-pastoral livelihood systems exercised by the resident population. Grounding the analysis in fieldwork among two pastoral Pashtun groups

(Achekzai and Baluch) residing in the village of Nau Abad located at the fringes of Kunduz oasis in the volatile District of Chahar Dara, three major lines of enquiry are pursued.

1. First, a brief historical outline will provide the background of 'making an oasis' in Kunduz, focusing also on state-centred agricultural development schemes and attempts of industrialisation, but also at the stages of war affecting oasis in the recent past.
2. Subsequently, a closer look at the current shape of military globalisation after 2001 in Kunduz will concentrate especially on the technologies and spatial arrangements of international military control and its relations to statebuilding in Afghanistan.
3. Finally, the paper addresses the question as to how local social and economic practices work out in such militarised contexts, and what room for manoeuvre is there for people to navigate through the difficult terrains of violence and conflict.



Source: Topography based on Generalny Stab 1:50 000 Topographic Series 1984-1986

Design: Schütte, cartography: Hilberer

Fig. 1: Kunduz Oasis's organisation

Making the Kunduz oasis

When attempting to analyse the making of Kunduz oasis through a historical lens two points seem critically important in order to better understand the current situation. First, the drainage of the malaria infested swamps in Kunduz during the 1930's turned what had been a hostile and disease-ridden environment into fertile agricultural areas and the richest province in Afghanistan. Before, the area had only supported strictly seasonal pastoral strategies carried out during the winter months by the Central Asian Arabs of Afghanistan who seasonally migrated with their flocks to the high mountain areas of Badakhshan (Barfield 1981), at a time when the name Kunduz was associated with danger and decay. Termed as the biggest development project in recent Afghan history (Barfield 1978, 29), the drainage of swamps was followed by the establishment of intricate canal networks and rather successful attempts of state-led industrialisation, epitomized through the establishment of Spinzar (white gold) Company that grew and ginned cotton and produced edible oil and soap. In fact, Afghanistan's cotton industry began in Kunduz in the 1930's and was accompanied by larger schemes of land distribution and forced cultivation of cotton. Today, the Spinzar Company is part of the French DAGRIS group (Développement des Agro-industries du Sud), engaged in a new Afghan project for cotton and oil development (cf. Paterson 2006). The second point relates to the advent of Pashtunization in the North enforced through the Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman Khan in his centralization policy that attempted to consolidate his rule in the North and protect the northern frontier against Russian imperial policies during the period of the great game that eventually established Afghanistan as a buffer state between Russia and Great Britain (Kreutzmann 1997). However, the advent of Pashtuns in an area before dominated by Turkic, Uzbek and Tajik groups changed the social setup and eventually turned Pashtuns into a dominant group in terms of sheer numbers that was favoured by state policies. Pashtun settlers were given preference in land distribution and infrastructure, e.g. vis-a-vis irrigation canals. This is also true for the Achekzai and Baluch of Nau Abad village, who after migrating from their native areas in Kandahar and Helmand to the drained Kunduz oasis were allotted 24 jerib (about 5 ha) of land after having jointly build an irrigation canal in the year 1312 of the Afghan calendar (i.e. 1933). Part of this land had to be used for growing cotton under the development policy of forced cultivation to supply the newly establish gin in Kunduz town. However, land was not a scarce resource at the time, and Pashtun groups established themselves quietly and effectively, and their being favoured by the official land distribution schemes carried out in the wake of the successful drainage project supported their successful residence in the oasis.

After the Kunduz oasis was established through the drainage project that was accompanied by industrialisation and settlement policies it provided the venue for complex agro-pastoral livelihood systems. These systems were based on a combination of irrigated agriculture on land parcels that were certified during the 1970's in the cadastral system of Afghanistan, and practices of mobile animal husbandry connecting the Kunduz oasis both with the pasture areas at its margins that seasonally serve as autumn and winter pastures, and with the distant high altitude summer areas in Badakhshan. Access to these summer pastures referred to as 'ailoq' was safeguarded through title deeds ('qawala') issued by the Afghan King that were also given

preferably to Pashtuns. In the case of the Achekzai and Baluch, both were given 'qawala' in the year 1952 exactly specifying the area to be used as summer pasture in Badakhshan. Achekzai were given pastures on the Shewa plateau, and Baluch in the mountain areas around the town of Kishim, and from the time onwards they treated these pastures as their own and directed their seasonal migration with large herds of fat-tailed sheep accordingly. These developments entitled Pashtun and other groupings to sustainably engage in practices of combined mountain agriculture (Ehlers and Kreutzmann 2000) spanning very large distances and functioning largely undisturbed until 1978 (Schütte 2012, Kreutzmann and Schütte 2011), the year of the Saur revolution in Afghanistan followed by the Soviet intervention (Dorronsoro 2000). When examining ruptures and continuities in Kunduz, the year 1978 resembles a critical landmark that invariably altered social and economic practices in the Kunduz oasis and put in motion a struggle over control that is ongoing until today, both in the oasis itself as well as in relation to the summer pastures in Badakhshan.

Kunduz has been a hotspot of military struggle ever since 1978, and already from that time onwards military strategies had global connotations. The Soviet occupants established formal control in Kunduz town but were never able to fully exercise control in the rural hinterlands of the oasis. The United States financed Islamist resistance groups around Kunduz during the Soviet era, and the most prominent and powerful at the time were Hezb-e Islami, led by Gulbudin Hekmetyar with a strong base in the Pashtun-dominated areas of Kunduz, and the Jamiat-i Islami led by Burhanuddin Rabbani with their base among Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen populations. Eventually after Soviet retreat, Kunduz fell into the hands of the Mujhaheddin who by the time were organised in the so-called security council of the North led by Ahmed Shah Massoud who was successfully extending his reach towards the North. However, the loose coalitions between various Mujhaheddin groups were susceptible to change and the years of the civil war between 1992 and 1995 witnessed fragmentation of military control between numerous commanders including the Uzbek warlord Dostum and the Kunduz Shura that was dominated by Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami and Ittihad-i-Islami led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. More importantly for the argument of this paper, however, is the fact that these struggles and the ensuing fragmentation of control in the Kunduz oasis led to changing social-economic practices that had also repercussions over distance. For Achekzai and Baluch pastoralists from Nau Abad this led to a phase of disrupted mobility between the years 1978 and 1996 – the times of actual foreign occupation and the subsequent disastrous civil war – when landmines on pastures, aerial bombardments, forced revenue extraction in kind, or outright livestock theft by different factions of the resistance for the first time seriously endangered the practice of mobile pastoralism. During the civil war there occurred an intensified conflict over access of Kunduz-based mobile pastoralists to the summer pastures in Badakhshan which had remained under the control of Tajik-dominated factions, culminating in an increasing non-Pashtun - Pashtun polarization. Many Pashtun pastoral groups often found themselves subject to intimidation, forcible displacement and theft of their livestock by a plethora of small and big commanders along their seasonal migratory routes (Schütte 2012). This is well documented by pastoralists themselves, who keep certified documents with them until today proving their being subject to forceful expropriation of their

livestock in significant numbers. The case documented by an Achekzai pastoralist is no exception and refers to a case where as many as 900 sheep were taken away in 1994 when the militias of the notorious warlord Rashid Dostum – today in an official position in the Karzai administration – raided the spring pastures and left pastoralists bereft of the basis of their livelihoods. At the time of research in Shewa, fifteen years later, this particular pastoral household had only managed to restock 100 sheep, showing how difficult it is to rebuild a herd once it is lost. The raid was documented and signed by the “Jihadi Council of Kunduz Province”, which also included the recent presidential candidate and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Abdullah from the Northern Alliance, who endorsed the paper and vetted it too. The advance of the Taliban to the North after 1996 saw strong military conflict in Kunduz oasis and made mobile pastoral strategies impossible, eventually leading a phase of involuntary sedentarization entailing the collapse of migration that characterised the reign of the Taliban between 1996 and 2001, when the route to Shewa was not passable due to heavy fighting. However, during this time the tenure relations on the plateau changed significantly, and Tajik commanders remained in control over Badakhshan and consolidated their power bases, putting them in a position to grab vast pasturelands in order to forcefully extract revenues from pastoralists and other pasture users, so as to further secure their positions. From this brief historical account two things can be deducted that have relevance not only for Kunduz oasis but for the situation in Afghanistan as a whole: first, military conflict in Afghanistan since 1978 has always been global and has led to ruptures in social configurations and economic practices and has become ethnicized to a significant degree with warlords and commanders recruiting their base from certain ethnic groupings, leading to animosities and ruptures in pastoral livelihood systems. Second, pastoralism in its multiple forms and as a livelihood strategy continues to be dynamic and flexible, with changing pastoral strategies reflecting societal pressure, shifting power structures and economic opportunities. Both these central findings have relevance until today. When looking at the shape military globalisation after 2001 in Kunduz the ethnic dimensions of insurgency and counterinsurgency play a significant role, and the flexibility of livelihood strategies allow for adaptation in times of insecurity and struggle.

Military globalisation after 2001

The complex settings in Kunduz oasis provided the immediate contexts for the global intervention in Afghanistan of 2001 that right from the beginning attempted to establish control over Kunduz. I have borrowed an analytical framework from Rachel Woodward in her treatise on military geographies (2012) to explore the technologies and spatial arrangements of military globalisation in Kunduz oasis, and how these affect local conditions, relations, and practices. This framework locates the means of military control in four rather complex developments to be explored with reference to the Kunduz oasis: the physical presence of international military and their organisation into Provincial Reconstruction Teams, leading to specific forms of governance and state/citizen relations, with means to control of information and accompanied by a rhetoric of security.

The physical presence of the international military produces quite distinct political economies of aid and security. These include the visible military landscapes such as army barracks and the regular patrolling with armoured vehicles, but more lethally aerial bombings and more recently also drone attacks. Kunduz was subject to carpet bombing right in 2001, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombings continued over the last 10 years leading to a large number of civilian casualties representing the official neglect of 'unworthy bodies' (Herold 2002) as a by-product of modern warfare. For instance, the aerial bombing of Kunduz in October 2001 alone led to more than 500 casualties in what euphemistically was called Operation Enduring Freedom (ibid.). However, the ensuing political economy of military intervention in Afghanistan that is supported both by drone strikes and aerial bombing campaigns as well as flow of aid resources and the ensuing proliferation of development projects. These produced immediate local effects, for instance when local elites succeed in capturing aid resources such as through the founding of construction companies in order to channel aid money into their own pockets. Given that these instances of massive corruption are paired with the fact that rural livelihoods in Afghanistan have worsened 10 years after the intervention (Kantor and Pain 2011) it is not surprising that the perception of assistance to Afghanistan is characterised by unmet expectations and that development activities are increasingly seen as part and parcel of military operations (Donini 2007). Another critical effect of the intervention is the heightened presence of insurgent groups in the Kunduz oasis following in the wake of foreign military presence. Here, the western rhetoric of establishing security through its military can be put to test, as Kunduz only became a hotspot of the anti-western insurgency after the German military established their barracks and increased the presence of soldiers and military machinery. The residential village of Achekzai and Baluch pastoralists was affected too, and infiltrating insurgent groups sought to win the support of local populations in their fight against the international military. Chahar Dara was soon established as an insurgent stronghold, and the only road leading to the villages in the district was subject to regular roadside attacks, turning the commute to Kunduz town into a dangerous undertaking. Aerial bombings contributed to insecurity in Chahar Dara, as the case of the German Colonel Georg Klein who ordered an air strike on two road tankers with more than 100 innocent casualties so viciously demonstrates. Another example taken from fieldwork in the neighbouring oasis in the Ishkamesh District of Takhar Province also demonstrates that the foreign military presence is locally perceived as problematic. Respondents there complained about what is seen as presuming and often impudent meddling in local affairs by foreign military actors. Accordingly, the foreign military is increasingly seen as a threat that brings physical insecurity to Ishkamesh, in spite of the Western publicity that claims exactly the opposite. People expressed a clear understanding about the work of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (cf. Stapleton 2007) in their area, which is perceived as bringing danger instead of security. This is also why people were seriously concerned when German soldiers arrived at night with about 100 vehicles and erected a field camp in the vicinity of Ishkamesh town in July 2008 and constructed roadblocks and conducted house searches. After two weeks, representatives of many villages requested the Germans to leave, fearing that their continued presence would attract insurgents to carry out attacks, or even worse, encourage insurgent groups to establish a more permanent base in the district. This example quite clearly

shows the differing perceptions on what constitutes security and how unpremeditated military presence and activity quite easily leads to the alienation of local populations and involuntarily supports insurgent activities. The same story can be told for Chahar Dara, and the fact remains that Kunduz oasis today is a major stronghold of insurgent groups, and new counterinsurgency strategies also incorporated specific forms of governance and state/citizen relations.

The US army in the South has established so-called Village Stability Operations that are funded through a strategy named 'money as a weapons system' representing yet another twist in the cultural turn in late modern warfare (Gregory 2008). In Kunduz, these strategies that have been extensively applied in South and East Afghanistan are copied in the North slightly differently through two major incentives: establishing village defence organisations or village militias that shall cooperate with the government and protect themselves from insurgents, and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) as a new surrogate government security agency recruited from local villagers and generously funded by the international military. Both programs can be seen as representative for the heightened collusion of the state, NGOs, the military and international donors, and both come with significant problems. Village militias – referred to as 'arbakai' in the Southeast of Afghanistan where the term originates as part of a tribal security system established in the absence of state security institutions (cf. Tariq 2008, 2009) - have been indeed established but found being involved in atrocities and extracting taxes from other villages in Kunduz Province. In the north, however, such local militias are largely made up of former Mujahideen from the civil war period who were disarmed in the early years of President Karzai's government. In the past couple of years, they were able to regroup under their former commanders supplied with new weapons and now called officially endorsed 'arbakai' (cf. Mashal 2011). Also the people of Nau Abad have been approached by the German military to defend their village against insurgent intrusions but politely declined to act as agents for the international mission. A larger contingent of German soldiers however established a temporary presence inside the village with the aim to evict insurgents and demonstrate their power (FAZ, October 30, 2011). These externally funded defence organisations that were created with the aim to establish pro-Government security bodies were converted into the ALP programme that was ultimately designed as the exit strategy of the international military. However, the ALP itself comes with two major fault lines: it is now found to be under control of local strongmen and commanders and is involved in documented atrocities and blunt rent-seeking, and locally often perceived as worse than the Taliban (Human Rights Watch 2011). Furthermore, those armed groups that have not made it through the vetting process and were not turned into an ALP brigade have turned into illegal militias that occasionally clash with any other among the various and confusing different types of militias in Kunduz. The need for establishing trust in the Afghan Government is effectively foiled through such programs and state-citizen relations are put under additional strain, rather than being part of a solution of enhancing the accountability of the Afghan state. A more positive example is the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) as another attempt of state expansion into local governance, without any involvement of the military but with international and local NGO's acting as gatekeepers. However, rather than designing elected

village organisations as a local governance bodies endowed with lasting responsibilities that work in equal partnership with government organisations the NSP has effectively been a program of village infrastructure provision. For instance, in Nau Abad 84 shallow wells were built through the programme, but the elected community council has not been approached by the Afghan Government as a cooperating body. The issues briefly addressed here all point to the problem of statebuilding, and strategies to reconcile the Afghan state and its citizens have seemingly not tapped the potentials of self-governing communities. Instead, the Afghan statebuilding project is relying on heavily engineered and centralised governance institutions and frameworks that were installed as part of the peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction process. As a radical agenda of social transformation the liberal peace project in Afghanistan has all but ignored the needs and interests of those placed at the margins where meanings of governance and the state are negotiated rather differently, but where the institutions designed as counterinsurgency instruments predate rather cooperate and as such widen the gap between the state and its margins.

Control of information is an apparent condition for military control. In Kunduz and in the context of the war on terror that has been intensified under the Obama government this refers to an increased number of targeted attacks carried out through a distance. Remotely controlled drone attacks in Afghanistan are increasing steadily and are often connected to the so-called disposition matrix - a list of names of presumed terrorists that need to be disposed of. All these issues are obviously connected to a rhetoric of defence and national security as part and parcel of the war on terror. Afghanistan has been defined as a space in need of support, with a western responsibility to ensure humans security and development in the country. Military control in Kunduz is however driven by fundamental misconceptions (cf. Wilder 2009): that reconstruction and modernization efforts are stabilizing rather than destabilizing (Aid = Economic Development = Stability); that poverty and a lack of reconstruction are an important cause of conflict; that aid projects help win hearts and minds and increase public support for the Afghan government and for foreign military presence; and that extending the reach of the central government in Afghanistan contributes to stabilization. The experience 12 years after the global intervention in Afghanistan shows that none of these presuppositions are grounded in the reality of the Afghan conflict. Still, Kunduz has been identified as a key area of stabilization efforts through the provision of timely Afghan Government-owned and -led governance and development, but the strategies employed to ensure this ownership of the not yet visible stabilization process appear to move in the exactly opposite direction.

Continuity and change in agro-pastoral livelihood systems

More importantly, however, is the question how these strategies facilitated through military globalisation impact on local social and economic practices, and what room for manoeuvre is there for people to navigate through the difficult terrains of violence and conflict. The example of Pashtun pastoralists from Nau Abad shows how phases of sedentarization alternate with re-nomadization when contexts allow for it. After being excluded from their summer areas the Achekzai and Baluch returned to their 'ailoqs' in 2002, when the route was free again, but pastoralists discovered that their ancestral pastures were now under armed

control and access was possible only via cash payments. This process was supported through the redrawing of district borders and the formation of new districts in Badakhshan by the central government, in order to accommodate the interests of local strongmen and military leaders allying with Karzai and to (re)establish a self-serving patrimonial system in Badakhshan, where official positions such as district governors became an attractive resource to be exploited. The case of land-grabbing is an important example of how Afghan institutions have been supplanted through power sharing deals by abusive stakeholders, who exert control through violence, patronage and corruption, often enjoying external backing. In practice, this meant that Tajik rulers who have assumed control over the Shewa plateau were able to extract fees to allow pasture access, and the Achekzai now reluctantly pay significant sums for their grazing rights. Baluch, however, were not allowed back to their pastures around Kishim for the first time in the year 2010. Local strongmen sold the grazing rights to other groups and Baluch had to face serious problems and were forced to seek grazing rights in other areas. Here, the issue of ethnic identity so forcefully enacted during civil war comes back into play. Tribal affinities and affiliations - such as being Achekzai or Baluch - build on notions of belonging to a group and location, on commonality of social practice, spatial connectedness and social cohesion. The realities generated out of these shared identities and the representation of difference and 'the other' - as in the dichotomy of mobile pastoralist and settler - have significance. For instance, the Achekzai refer to themselves as Kuchi in their summer areas and while migrating, and differentiate themselves from others by stressing their practice of mobility. In this sense, mobility quite literally works as a lived relation, 'an orientation to oneself, to others and to the world' (Adey 2010, xvii). In the residential village, however, it is the tribal affiliation that serves as a distinguishing marker of identity and belonging. Being Achekzai, Baluch or Popalzai is literally connected to territoriality, as access to the spring pastures at the fringes of Kunduz oasis is regulated according to such tribal memberships (cf. Map 1). Additionally, ethnic identities as Pashtuns are cultivated following a regained political salience of ethnicity that appeared to have been overcome during resistance in the 1980's (Tapper 2008). This was obvious during the Taliban reign when the Tajik and Shughni population of Badakhshan suspected the Achekzai and others to be Taliban associates, and it is also evident today when the Pashtun-dominated District of Chahar Dara is uniformly perceived as a Taliban stronghold. Ethnic identities are also employed when Achekzai claim that Pashtuns are universally oppressed by Tajik powerholders that today control the Shewa plateau and demand revenues. The ways different groups are represented are important, as social identities constructed in these ways are instrumental for claiming and establishing access to resources.

Looking at irrigated agriculture in the oasis, the case of Nau Abad also serves to provide insights into recent developments. The cadastral survey data from 1975 on Nau Abad reveals that there are altogether 572 land plots on 1752 jerib of irrigated land, showing how successive rounds of inheritance made available land parcels successively smaller. While many among pastoralists own parcels of irrigated lands that are used as fall-back options but median plot sizes in Nau Abad of 2.1 jerib are hardly sufficient to sustain a livelihood. People thus also started to convert pasture areas in the vicinity of their village into rainfed

agricultural plots. Land and livestock are however important markers and social stratification in the village is defined by land and herd ownership. It was estimated during discussions that in Nau Abad that 30% of its population engages in mobile livestock keeping, 30% in irrigation and rainfed agriculture, 20% in both activities, and 20% have neither land nor livestock and work as contracted shepherds, day labourers and sharecroppers. Many villagers thus have to rely on limited access to land and livestock. Compared with the original scheme of land distribution when each original dweller of Nau Abad was endowed with 24 jerib of irrigated land this shows how the adaptive capacity of Afghan farmers throughout the last 35 years of war and conflict have been put under stress and led to an increased concentration of land and livestock in the village. However, the example also shows that agriculture is still a major economic backbone even if concentrated in fewer hands and on smaller plots, and that pastoral practices can be adopted whenever opportunities with prospective chances are prevalent.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the military globalisation of Kunduz oasis created a distinct political economy of aid and security that favours the Afghan elites who are able to channel aid resources and engage in forceful rent-seeking behaviour. Many Afghans are reminded on the early 1990's when a plethora of small commanders was extracting rent and the rule of law was arbitrary and sketchy. Security institutions such as the ALP have turned out to be part of the problem, potentially fostering the insurgency. Winning hearts and minds has not been achieved through enacting the military as a development agency. The above discussion in its essence boils down to the central theme of the relations of the Afghan state to its rural periphery, and in terms of local peacebuilding a way is proposed that seeks to formally bind rural village communities into structures of the state by empowering them into agents of local governance. This has to be seen against the background of the 'insubstantial state' in Afghanistan, and the fact that historically '... the state exists outside and apart from civil society... everything to do with administration is isolated from village life, and as far as possible is ignored by the community...[a] fundamental state of alienation...separates the two' (Roy 1990, 20-21). The wide separation between state and rural society throughout Afghan history and the shape of state-society interrelations that occur under such conditions has been subject to many scholarly deliberations (e.g. Shahrani 1986) and put into context of the Western intervention, humanitarian politics and the security-development discussion (e.g. Johnson and Leslie 2004). However, the schism also becomes visible when looking at the example of the Achekzai. Rules of access to their summer pastures are solely determined by strongmen and their militias, and the Afghan state is not included at all in any transfers of rights and resources. Lack of access to the new powerholders emanating from the Northern Alliances exposes pastoralism as practised by the Achekzai to new risks and vagaries that they cannot control. However, the example of the Achekzai also demonstrates the resilience of pastoral communities and their capacity to continuously adapt to changing political, economic and social conditions. Viewed through the lens of their changing mobility practices when striving to access the Shewa pastures, the intricate entanglements of power to which

pastoral practices are exposed become visible. What apparently is needed is an expansion of the Afghan state to encompass the local level that reflects experiences of including local communities into state-building procedures and addresses the failures of past interventions to reform local government in Afghanistan. It would further aim to rectify Afghanistan's contentious relationship with its most marginal regions and their long history of rejecting government control.

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